

Sūrah 83

Al-Muṭaffifīn (The Stinters)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The word *al-muṭaffifīn* occurring in the opening verse constitutes the *Sūrah's* title.

Period of Revelation

Both its style and content suggest that this *Sūrah* must have been revealed in the early days of the Makkan period. At that point in time, a series of *Sūrahs* had been sent down in quick succession in order to persuade the Makkans of the doctrine of the Hereafter. Internal evidence indicates that this *Sūrah* was revealed when the Makkans had started persecuting the Muslims in the form of mockery and humiliation. At this juncture, they had not as yet taken to physical torture. Some Qur'ānic scholars, however, regard it as a Madīnan *Sūrah*. What accounts for this misperception is the following report by Ibn 'Abbās. He stated: "When the Prophet (peace be upon him) arrived in Madīnah, he noted that the people there were stinters in that when they took from others by measure, they took their full share. But when they themselves measured or

weighed for others, they gave less than what was due to them. Then Allah sent down *Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn* and the locals gave up stinting." (Nasā'i, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Marduwayh, Ibn Jarīr, and Bayhaqī.) However, as pointed out by us in the Introduction to *Sūrah al-Dahr*, it was customary among Companions and Successors to relate thus a particular verse or *Sūrah* to its circumstantial setting. So doing, they did not have in mind its chronology or date of revelation. What emerges, at most, from Ibn 'Abbās's above report is that on observing the malpractice of stinting among the Madīnans, the Prophet (peace be upon him), by Allah's leave, recited this particular *Sūrah* to them, which set matters right.

Subject Matter and Themes

The Hereafter is the *Sūrah*'s main concern. Verses 1-6 censure, in particular, traders for stinting. Of the numerous social ills of the day, this is singled out as an illustration of the evil which overtakes a society that does not believe in Life-after-Death. Unless man is fully convinced about his accountability on the Day of Judgement, when he will have to render his account for every penny, he cannot be absolutely honest in his dealings. Some may practise honesty as a good policy only on a limited scale yet they do not follow it, if it does not prove beneficial for them. Only God-consciousness and a firm belief in the Hereafter can infuse true and abiding honesty and fairness in man. For then he takes honesty as part of his religious duty, not some policy that may be followed only as long as it is rewarding for him.

The *Sūrah*'s opening part, thus, effectively presses home the nexus between excellent morals and the doctrine of the Hereafter. Verses 7-17 declare that the misdeeds of evil-doers are being recorded and they are destined for their devastating loss on the Day of Judgement. Verses 18-28 describe the happy end of the pious. Their good deeds are also being entered into the exalted record maintained by angels.

At the end, the believers are comforted whereas the unbelievers are warned of the dire consequences for their maltreatment of those who profess and practise faith. On the Day of Reckoning these culprits will undergo terrible punishment, which will gratify the pious.